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ABSTRACT

The experience of the research and evaluation department in the Dallas (Texas) Independent School District in pioneering the use of a policy-oriented report to communicate evaluation findings is described. The report--the chart essay--replaced a methods-oriented report. In restructuring the methods-oriented report into a policy-oriented report, the traditional parts of an evaluation are arranged in a series of charts. The sequential unfolding of the research study is presented in a chart essay that presents the process as well as the findings of the evaluation. A model is presented that exemplifies the chart essay process in an evaluation of Chapter 1 summer school in Dallas. The model involves the following steps: (1) specify the program to be evaluated; (2) identify evaluation recipients; (3) determine the respective responsibilities of evaluators and administrators; (4) identify focal issues; (5) develop critical questions; (6) design data collection and analysis procedures; (7) collect data; (8) analyze data; (9) write the report; (10) present the findings; (11) elaborate the implications; and (12) act on these implications. The chart essay is designed for policymakers who have limited time; it is a way of ensuring communication of evaluation findings for swift and accurate utilization. Seven tables are included. (SLD)

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COMMUNICATING EVALUATION FINDINGS: THE USE OF A CHART ESSAY

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COMMUNICATING EVALUATION FINDINGS: THE USE OF A CHART ESSAY

Abstract

This paper describes the experience of the research and evaluation department in Dallas (Texas) Independent School District in pioneering the use of a policy-oriented report--the chart essay--instead of a methods-oriented report to communicate findings. Limitations of the methods-oriented report and recommendations for enhancing utilization are reviewed. A definition and a description of the steps in designing, conducting and presenting information in a chart essay are presented. Training information about the philosophy and the techniques of the chart essay is provided. Local (DISD) reactions and identification of implications of using this process in a large urban district conclude the study.

COMMUNICATING EVALUATION FINDINGS: THE USE OF A CHART ESSAY

Attention of behavioral scientists has recently become more clearly focused on the impact evaluation has on program and policy decisions (Weiss, 1988). There are rising expectations of policy makers (and of evaluators themselves) that more "user-friendly" findings should be provided. How the traditional model of evaluation reports will evolve from precise, technically correct, poorly disseminated documents into ones that are comfortable, easily read, and widely circulated is unclear. Even more important is the question of whether it is possible to do this. This question goes to the heart of the issue, that is, how to maintain integrity of research and still communicate effectively to different audiences.

As in many organizations, different audiences for evaluation findings are a fact of life in a large school district. **Many** of the audiences are familiar with the educational system; **some** are familiar with curriculum issues; but **very few** have an adequate background in research design and statistics to effectively use traditional reports. It is no wonder that communication between evaluators who have the responsibility to generate information and decision makers who have the responsibility to make informed decisions often seems nonexistent. Decision makers have been described as "people in a rush" and evaluators as "people concerned with methods" (DeLoria and Brookins, 1984).

Because this seems to be true, a suggestion has been made that two reports are needed: scientific and policy. Rejecting the idea of doubling the work by the research and evaluation department (R&E), the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) became involved in investigating different formats that would address the scientific cocerns while still relaying accurate policy information. The purpose of this paper is to describe DISD experience in adapting the chart essay to report evaluation findings in a large urban school district. Results indicated that the chart essay satisfied the criticisms of method-oriented report as well as maximized the possibility for utilization of evaluation findings. This description of the DISD experience is in five parts. Part one reviews limitations of methods-oriented reports. Part two reports on recommendations made for the enhancement of utilization of evaluation findings as well as documents attempts to address the problem of underutilization. Part three describes the steps used in designing, conducting and presenting information in a chart essay. Part four of the study describes the training in the philosophy and the techniques of the chart essay. Part five reports local (DISD) reactions and identifies implications of using this process in a large urban district.

The authors want to thank Professor James F. McNamara of Texas A&M University for his reactions to an earlier version of this paper.

Part One: Limitations of the Methods-Oriented Report

The methods-oriented report is a highly structured format where the problem statement, review of literature, hypotheses, method, results and discussion are presented with an emphasis on the methodology. Its central focus is to uphold the conventions of science rather than to meet the needs of policymakers and practitioners (Haensly, Lupkowski and McNamara, 1987). The intention, however, of evaluators is to help the decision makers make wise, more-enlightened decisions because of the evidence presented in the evaluation report. Even though the idea of evaluation bringing enlightenment to decision makers is appealing to evaluators, methods-oriented reports sent to administrators generally do not bring about much change (Weiss, 1988).

It seems obvious that the evaluators' intentions and the apparent focus of methods-oriented reports do not match. Even though a methods-oriented report upholds the rigor necessary for scientific research, this format has serious limitations when used to relate research findings. Table 1 documents limitations presented over the past twenty years. The seven limitations can be divided into those associated with producers of reports and those associated with consumers of the reports.

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There are four limitations associated with producers of methods-oriented reports. First, there is an assumption that a few key people will determine the change that will occur as a result of the findings (Weiss, 1988). Findings in a methods-oriented report are related as if most action was determined by a lone decision maker rather than a pluralistic community (Cronbach, 1982). With its difficult methodology, complex format and imbedded results, the methods-oriented report targets only key people with the necessary background and interest to interpret the study.

Secondly, this type of report fails to acknowledge the political nature of program decision making. Together these limitations do not take into account the fact that decisions are the outcome of multiple interests in contention. Empirical research shows that evaluation effects change when the knowledge becomes generalized into the common stock of knowledge of the organization (Cronbach and Associates, 1980). Generalization from key personnel to the organization is, at best, a long process rather than an immediate result. Therefore, the impact of evaluation is dependent upon the willingness of the target people to disseminate findings.

Third, with administration's generally limited participation in the evaluation process, there is limited interest in its outcomes (Agarwala-Rogers, 1977). Their interest in generally

communicating findings depends upon its perceived value. From the point of view of the administrators involved in decision making, the value of an evaluation is gauged by the degree to which the information contained therein helps them fulfill their chosen roles and achieve goals they consider important (Lynn, 1977). A methods-oriented report is structured to uphold conventions of science without regard to administrative goals.

A fourth limitation associated with producers of evaluation reports is analysis limited to primarily quantifiable data. Enhancing validity by dealing only with statistics and parameters that can be manipulated with sophisticated analysis appeals to the allegiance within evaluators to scientific method. It does not, however, enhance the usability or readability of the report for decision makers (David, 1981; Edwards, Guttentag, and Snapper, 1975). Scientific researchers in every field rely on measures of statistical significance in recommending decisions (Freeman, 1977). While statistical significance should not be ignored in evaluation research, it is not at the heart of the inference process of administrative decision making. The idea of "policy significance" (a broader term than "statistical significance") guides their thinking. The question in policy significance is whether or not the differences are important (large) enough to be considered useful compared with other aspects of a program. A program may prove to be statistically effective but have limited practical impact so as to render the finding unimportant to administrators. So "policy significance" encompasses statistical significance as well as practical significance but also may include other considerations such as th epolitic al climate, financial restraints, etc. By ignoring the concept of policy significance, methods-oriented reports are of little value. The decision of policy significance should be a shared activity between administrators and evaluation researchers. Without this sharing, decision makers are likely to view a methods-oriented evaluation as a kind of news or continuing education rather than a direct cause leading to a specific result (Weiss and Bucuvalass, 1980).

For the consumer of evaluation reports, there are three limitations of the methods-oriented report. First, administrators (needing data to make decisions) may have limited knowledge of the type of information needed (Mintzberg, 1973) or of the type of information available. If test scores, for example, have been all that was provided upon which decisions have been based, test scores may be what are asked for. Evaluators, on the other hand, know that other types of data (such as survey information) may be more useful answering questions of interest than relying strictly on tests.

A second limitation for consumers of evaluation reports is the tendency to oversimplify complex issues or data (Ligon and Jackson, 1989). This is nowhere more evident in media reports of evaluation findings. Local education reporters consistently claim others write headlines. Since headline writers know that bad news sells papers, they epitomize the negative

nature of news reporting. A more pervasive and serious problem is the pressure they represent to reduce all issues to a single number that can be highlighted, compared and used as a bottom line for judgements. Administrators often succumb to this same temptation to reduce all issues to a single statistic, a simple measure of a very complex issue. Even though this cannot appropriately be done, it is often attempted by selecting one from a number of statistics.

A third limitation is the unwillingness of decision makers to alter the status quo (Weiss, 1988). The momentum not to change is much stronger than that to change. Therefore, only when the evidence is plainly presented can the momentum be altered. With its preponderance of methodology and imbedded results, the methods-oriented report offers little impact for change.

Part Two: Recommendations to Enhance the Utilization of Evaluation

As criticism of the method-oriented report mounts, suggestions for enhancing the utilization of evaluation have been made. Many suggestions focus on peripheral changes rather than restructuring the format. Table 2 summarizes the factors believed to be important to encouraging decision makers to use evaluation reports.

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These recommendations for developing questions and presenting results directly address the limitations of methods-oriented report. In developing questions, the ideal focus and organization of the report are described. The focus should be on policy and the organization should be by evaluation questions. Administrators are well-served by the policy-oriented report (the chart essay) with its clear, straightforward language and its emphasis on findings rather than methodology (Haensly, Lupkowski and McNamara, 1987). Using questions to organize the report permits the reader to go directly to the question of interest.

In presenting results, these recommendations guide the evaluator to present the findings to meet decision makers' needs. Administrators who consciously pay attention to evaluation view themselves and are often viewed by others as behaving rationally. It is in their best interest to cite evaluation evidence as that is what good decision makers do (Feldman and March, 1981).

With a receptive audience, evaluators who present findings conducive to the needs of the administrators realize the functional goal of the evaluation report. That goal is to clarify the nature, and extent of problems and show their susceptibility to purposive action (Cronbach and Associates, 1980). Many solutions to reaching this goal have been offered. One avenue open to evaluators has been to produce condensed narrative, devoid of experimental details and analysis (Haensly, Lupkowski and McNamara, 1987). Others (Eaker and Huffman, 1984) have suggested using a consumer validation approach in which professional consultants gather,

synthesize and translate topical research in order to present them in seminars for teachers. Teachers then translate the findings into classroom behaviors. Mowbray (1988) suggested finding an agent or liaison to link the evaluator and administrator whose responsibility is to translate findings in ways to optimize utilization. The problem inherent in both of these solutions is that the findings may become distorted when taken out of the original context. When field applications and pure research , that is, practical implications and methods-oriented reports, lack close proximity the necessary linkages can become obscure.

Other evaluators have introduced the concept of responsive evaluation. This idea promotes an ongoing communication and collaboration between evaluators and administrators (Stake, 1975; Guba and Lincoln, 1981). While this theory of evaluation responds to the problems found in the traditional process, it falls short of describing exactly what about the final communication needs to be changed. To maintain the scientific rigor and to respond to administrators' need for useful reports requires a specific restructuring of the methods-oriented report.

Part Three: Steps in the Chart Essay Process of Evaluation

In restructuring the methods-oriented report into a policy-oriented report, the traditional parts of an evaluation document are arranged in a series of charts. The information from the problem statement, review of literature, hypotheses, methodology, results and discussion parts is communicated visually in charts. Thus the resulting information is essentially the same as in a traditional report: that is, a sequential unfolding of the research study from questions considered, to recommendations, to future projections. But the presentation if dramatically different. The relationship between the elements of these two types of reports can be seen in Table 3 (Haensly, et al., 1987).

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Built into the chart essay process is the cognizance of the administrator's existing knowledge of the particular subject. It assumes this knowledge as a basis for exploring questions of interest to the evaluation of a project or program. As such, a chart essay is a product or report of evaluation findings as well as a process of evaluation with an inherent philosophy and set of techniques unique to itself. In describing the chart essay, it will be referred to as the process as well as the complete document. Because each question is designed to stand alone on a page with data and findings, each page in the document can legitimately also be called a "chart essay". Therefore, to avoid confusion, the word "process" will be attached when referring to the process and the term will be capitilized when referring to the complete document.

Like responsive evaluation (Stake, 1975; Guba and Lincoln, 1981), the chart essay promotes ongoing communication and collaboration between evaluators and administrators. Likewise, it supplies school personnel with conceptualization and supporting procedures to ensure evaluations will respond usefully to their concerns (Stufflebeam and Webster, 1988). This should not be construed to mean that collaboration with administrators by evaluators involves abdicating any of the responsibility that evaluators have toward the evaluation project or scientific rigor as in the methods-oriented report. On the contrary, the responsibilities of both groups (administrators and evaluators) are clearly stated. It requires a straightforward negotiation of the responsibilities to achieve the most accurate results.

The chart essay process emphasizes clear communication, valid research, and mutual respect between evaluators and program administrators. These three tenets can be explained as follows: (1) Clear communication demands that the inquiry be a logical unfolding of the research. A logical unfolding means a step by step process. In order to encompass all elements of an inquiry, an outline of tasks is developed. However, the tasks are in question-form describing the planned evaluation. (2) Validity requires the design of the inquiry be appropriate and replicable (Borg and Gall, 1979). (3) The mutual respect issue is addressed by presentation of the data being central to the planning of the project (McNamara, Barona, Haensly and Jones, 1986). The administrator's need for provision of choice, acknowledgement of goals, awareness of organizational preconditions, rationality and structure in the supplying of information is met forthrightly. It is, therefore, explicitly designed for an executive briefing, ideally presented in conference session to policymakers and decision makers. The key prepatory activity is, then, to accurately anticipate questions from the intended audience in the ontological order in which the questions would evolve. For each question, a chart essay clearly and concisely presents findings.

In the DISD experience, the Chapter 1 Summer School evaluation followed the process pioneered between faculty at Texas A&M University and the Spring (Texas) Independent School District (Smith, McNamara, and Barona, 1986) developing an evaluation in Chart Essay form. The Chart Essay had two objectives: (1) to transform policy issues of interest into specific research questions and (2) to place each answer in a format that highlights the actual research data gathered in the field.

As alluded to earlier, using the chart essay involves more than just putting data into a different format. It is a distinct process of evaluation, a progression of tasks exemplifying skills and beliefs unique to this process. The 11 step model is summarized in Table 4. While each step may not always be distinct in its beginning and ending in regard to the next step, the chronology of the steps does not vary.

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Insert Table 4 here

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Step 1: Specify the project or program to be evaluated. It is essential to utilization of evaluation findings that the decision makers' conceptual framework be such that every time they are involved in an upcoming decision, evaluators are considered necessary (Rich, 1975). This requires that evaluators be involved in staff meetings and be knowledgeable about topics under discussion. In addition, the ability to focus on and articulate the specific issue and delineate information needs is necessary (Chelimsky, 1986). When an issue is complex and many kinds of information are needed, the chart essay provides a means to convey a policy report in concrete action terms.

Prior to the beginning of summer school, the Chapter 1 program personnel requested a more extensive evaluation of the summer program than had been done previously. The evaluation team suggested that this request required more information than just achievement testing results. In agreeing to this analysis, the Chapter I program personnel immediately rejected a lengthy report in a traditional (methods-oriented) style. Piloting a new format, the Chart Essay, was suggested. After a short explanation, the use of the new format as a pilot was approved by both the Chapter 1 personnel and the evaluation team. The exact dates and specific grade levels for summer school were then specified.

Step 2: Identify program administrators who will receive the evaluation findings. After the project is approved, identifying stakeholders who have direct use for the findings is next. As simple as this sounds, in a large organization, the evaluator must realize the impact of a report may go beyond the immediate program personnel. The politics of information dissemination may also come into play. This is why it is essential to follow Mitroff's (1983) stakeholder model to identify all the decision makers at the onset of the project.

The Director of State and Federal Programs in the district identified the stakeholders in the summer school program as the professional staff from the program office. The evaluation team suggested that certain curriculum and staff development personnel would also be involved in planning and implementing the summer school program and thus would also be stakeholders. All of these people needed to receive the information from the evaluation. They were all then identified as the "summer school committee."

Step 3: Negotiate respective responsibilities of evaluators and program administrators. To ensure a smooth working relationship, it is important that respective responsibilities be hammered out through free interaction between the decision makers and the evaluators. This takes on the appearance of contract negotiations. Both sides, therefore, begin to take responsibility for success of the evaluation. Since the decision makers become involved from

the beginning, they feel a stake in the outcome. It is important to note the educational aspect of this step. Decision makers learn the tasks involved in evaluation and the scope and sequence of the activity. Evaluators become aware of the impact evaluation has (or could have) on program decisions as well as learning just how those decisions are reached. It is during this negotiation process that the concept of mutual respect is most important. It is evident in terminology used, requests made, and disagreements resolved.

During this series of negotiations in the evaluation of summer school, the discrete and shared responsibilities for both the evaluators and the program administrators were developed. The Summer School Committee took responsibility for program implementation. They agreed to provide access to needed data by the evaluators. The evaluation team agreed to perform the technical tasks leaving interpretations, implications and conclusions to the people involved in planning. The evaluators retained a consultive role in this last interaction. Data collection, analysis, and presentation was left in the control of the evaluation team (see Table 2).

Step 4: Identify what issues are the focus of each group. After respective roles are defined, determining the issues to be addressed is the next logical step. The evaluators play the role of tempering the decision makers enthusiasm for information. They must explain the realities of the inverse relationship between complex data requirements and time requirements. By imposing time and quality limits, the evaluators force the decision makers to clarify their priorities and specify the information they want. The result of this step should be a list of information domains which the decision makers consider most important to planning.

For Chapter 1 Summer School, this step involved two meetings with the whole group (evaluation team and summer school committee). Prior to the initial issue meeting, the evaluators requested that the members of the committee develop a list of all information they needed to plan a successful summer program. The evaluators brought nothing to this meeting. Collection of these lists and clarification of the items was the sole activity of this meeting. A short time later, a compiled list of the issues from the committee members was developed by the evaluators. Using this process, the Chapter 1 Summer School evaluation in DISD developed and addressed five domains or issues

Domain I. *What was the purpose of Chapter 1 Summer School?*

Domain II. *What conditions existed for Chapter 1 Summer School?*

Domain III. *How do we know that the Chapter 1 Summer School was successful?*

Domain IV. *What were the views of teachers in Chapter 1 Summer School?*

Domain V. *What were the strengths and weaknesses of the 1989 Chapter 1 Summer School program?*

Step 5: Develop questions that reflect issues of interest. This step is where the expertise of evaluators is most clearly evident. The skill to focus precisely from critical issue to answerable question to reportable results is required here. Some of the general principles used in developing survey questions are helpful in this step. Specifically these are desirability versus feasibility, validity of answers, personnel requirements, and identifying type of information sought (Dillman, 1978). With each question, desirable questions can be constructed. These same items, while desirable, may not be feasible. For example, in the DISD experience, the issue of "impact of geographic location of summer school sites" was identified. A desirable item might be: "What is the impact of geographic location on student attendance?" Although interesting, the information necessary to answer this was too complex for the scope of a summer school term. A more feasible item was "By home school, what was the average number of days of student attendance?" This can indirectly deal with the issue of geographic location impact.

The second principle is one of validity. It is one thing to get answers to evaluation questions; it is another to obtain credible, valid answers from the right source. In designing questions, wording to extract accurate information using terminology appropriate to the source is crucial.

The third principle is living within the staffing limits for evaluation. It might produce excellent results to interview kindergarten students about their summer school experience, but the personnel requirements to do so may not be worthwhile for the return.

The fourth, and perhaps most important, principle for this step is to identify the type of information sought by each issue. In survey terms, the four types of information are attitude, attribute, beliefs and behavior (Dillman 1978). In evaluation, questions can be easily fit into these categories By identifying the type of information sought, the most appropriate means of collecting the data and the proper source for the data is clarified.

After developing the questions, the evaluator makes a shell of the entire report minus the data. This particular organizational activity by the evaluator gives substance to the scope and sequence of work.

For Chapter 1 Summer School, questions were developed to access information about these issues identified by domain. These along with the issues list was sent back to the summer school committee. The committee reviewed and approved the questions. The shell for the chart essay became the plan for the evaluation for the summer.

Step 6: Design data collection strategies and analysis procedures. As the shell of the chart essay is created, data needs emerge. Thus data collection strategies (as well as analysis procedures) needed to fill out the shell become evident. Before summer school began, any

cooperation needed from the summer school committee to aid the data collection was communicated .

Step 7: Collect the data. Using scientific methodology and rigor, data collection begins by the evaluation team. Careful description of the procedures used for each question is recorded. Strategies employed during the 1989 summer included classroom observations, interviews, scrutiny of achievement data, and surveys of pertinent stakeholders.

Step 8. Analyze the data. After data collection, the analysis is the responsibility of the evaluation team. The types of questions in the report guide the data analysis. For example, for the observation data, frequencies, time intervals and time duration notations were used to organize the descriptive data. In this instance the classroom was the unit of analysis. To determine the effect of staff development, evaluation instruments filled out by the teachers and the evaluators were tallied. The percent reporting successful attainment of staff development goals was the strategy for analyzing this data. A more complex statistical analysis was used to analyze achievement data.

Step 9: Write the report. The intent of the report is to focus attention on the issues of interest. Each question is showcased at the top of a page. Within an individual essay, the chart describing the findings provide the most challenging and creative opportunity for presenting information in such a way as to cause the greatest impact on the program administrators. Clarity is enhanced by using a single chart for a single question. Following the question is a short statement describing the data source and analysis procedure. The descriptive data table takes a simple bivariate form with data condensed into easily understood amounts such as percents (as opposed to correlations or F values).

In the DISD report, 25 charts were developed corresponding to the five domains of interests and their subsets of questions. An example of a question developed into a chart essay is presented in Table 5 (Jones and Lamb, 1989)

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The information was followed by trend statements which are concise explanations of the data. Trend statements exemplify a fundamental difference in methods-oriented and policy-oriented reports. These statements in a chart essay are not statements of hypotheses that must be accepted or rejected. They serve a focusing purpose to anchor the reader in the data to develop their own conclusions. Trend statements are derived from the data but are explicitly explained in the text. To be most effective, these statements should force the reader to look more closely at the specific data in the accompanying table and to become actively involved in its interpretation. Each trend statement was written so it could stand independently of the other

statements. These statements focused on accurate descriptions of the analysis of data. Thus, the emphasis of the entire report was descriptive (what is) rather than prescriptive (what should be done by the program administrators).

In addition, the report included two explanatory parts. Consistent with any policy report, the chart essay began with an overview of the questions in the study, a description of the Chapter 1 program, and an explanation of the chart essay process in a section called "Design of the Inquiry". It was followed by the five domains evaluated for the Chapter 1 program.

Step 10: Present the findings. Actual plans to prepare and return the evaluation begin with step one. Additional information used in preparing the report needs to be available for the presentation. The presentation is done in executive briefing style with interaction between evaluators and stakeholders continuing throughout the session. Because the plan was done jointly with much input from all interested parties, the presentation may become a psuedo-planning session as trends are explained and explored with decision makers.

As the DISD report was planned and written as a presentation to the summer school committee, plans to present were discussed at the first meeting. At the conclusion of the summer term, the evaluation report was completed for presentation to the Summer School Committee and eventually to the school board. The summer school committee, (plus new members of the Chapter 1 program planning group) were then convened for an executive briefing. In addition to the summer school report, an instrument to evaluate the format and presentation was included since this was a pilot of new procedures. The briefing was informal with questions asked and suggestions shared by most participants.

Step 11. Elaborate implications. As the negotiated responsibility of the summer school committee, implications for future summer school programs were offered during the presentation. Acting in a consulting role, the evaluation team offered possible explanations for data trends (Schein, 1969). Although asked for specific recommendations for remedying certain problem areas, the evaluation team maintained an appropriate professional stance as per the original negotiation.

Step 12: Act on implications. Future planning not only for just the summer program but also for the regular program was conducted concurrently to the elaborations in some areas. Other specific changes to be considered were tabled until the January planning of the summer program for 1990.

Part Four: Chart Essay Training

The positive response by the Chapter 1 program personnel to the format sparked interest within the R&E Department to develop expertise in using the chart essay process for

other reports that would be presented to program administrators as well as the school board. To accomplish this, training was done with key personnel. A small group convened led by the evaluation team from the summer school evaluation. The workshop goal was to understand the philosophy, techniques and implications of the chart essay as a process of evaluation. The specific objectives of the workshop are listed in Table 6

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Four sessions were held lasting 60 to 90 minutes each. It was initially stated that the work would all be done during the workshop time, but as interest and expertise grew, more work was done between classes. From one to three weeks elapsed between sessions depending upon work needed for the next session and workload of the participants.

Each session had particular objectives and readings. As the workshop progressed, more and more actual workshop time was devoted to the chart essay philosophy and how it related to that of the methods-oriented report. The tasks were being done outside the sessions and insights about the process were brought to the sessions to share with all participants.

A group report presented to a regional conference was suggested as the chart essay project for most participants So the meetings became joint times of learning about the format and working on the presentation.

An overview of the workshop is presented in Table 7. Most examples were taken from chart essays previously used in DISD so the work would have meaning for the participants. After the first session, the participants themselves had parts to present for each workshop so the time was interactive rather than lecture.

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Part Five: Implications

At the conclusion of Chapter 1 Summer School in DISD, the evaluation report was completed and submitted to the summer school committee. At an executive briefing which included the committee plus personnel involved in the 1989-90 program, the Chart Essay was presented. While normally, a briefing can be planned to take approximately one minute per page, the format of information caused such interest that the session extended well beyond that. As a result of the report, the program manager asked for specific policy changes in regard to all main domains in the evaluation. The assistant superintendent for research and evaluation then

adopted the use of chart essays as a pilot project for the department for the following year.

Five implications from the DISD experience were identified (Jones, Murray and Dryden, 1990):

1. The chart essay is a viable form of communication of evaluation findings in a large urban school district.
2. Findings presented in a chart essay are clearer and more accessible than in a methods-oriented report.
3. Administrators are more likely to actively respond to concise presentations of data than to long rationales for evaluators' recommendations.
4. Evaluators and administrators are interested in clear communication of findings.
5. Because of its responsive nature, the chart essay shows potential for uses in an R&E department (beyond for major evaluation reports).
6. Even though the chart essay is policy-oriented, it is not limited to policy issues. It has proven to be very effective in communicating instructional and programmatic results as well.
7. Though well-suited to descriptive data, the chart essay has successfully communicated complex statistical analysis results which still play a major part in evaluation.

Conclusion

The chart essay is constructed for policymakers who are rushed. Within the methods-oriented report, much of the text contains lengthy sections dealing with methods and procedures in an attempt to establish the validity of the result. While this is technically correct, it tends to obscure findings. When evaluation findings are verbose and convoluted, they will be set aside for an indefinite future. If researchers want their findings to take on meaning through implementation, those findings must be communicated in easily accessible language and form (Katz 1984). Utilization can move swiftly and accurately if the evaluator stays actively in touch with how findings are translated into policy change. The chart essay has proven to be one way of ensuring this synergistic relationship between evaluators and program administrators. The ultimate goal of all evaluations can be satisfied well through chart essays as one means to further "an organization's conscious and deliberate pursuit of excellence" (Wergin, J. F. & Braskamp, L.A., 1987, p.99).

The philosophy or belief system inherent in the chart essay process requires the evaluator to leave behind the "mystique" that has surrounded R&E in the past. By tearing down this barrier, the research must stand open and exposed to be judged by its fidelity to good research practices. Poor research can no longer hide behind ambiguity and obscurity. It is past time for the consumers of research to demand readability as well as validity from evaluation researchers. Effective communication must be a featured characteristic of future research and

evaluation for it to have any but the most narcissistic of uses. With all of this in mind, evaluators need to examine their role to become involved not only in collecting and analyzing information but also in presenting it clearly and concisely. The DISD experience indicates the chart essay is a viable alternative that meets these criteria.

TABLE 1

Limitations of Methods-Oriented Reports

Problems associated with producers of evaluation reports:

- Limited target audience of key decision makers rather than multiple participants (Cronbach, 1980)
- Limited acknowledgement of the decision making process (David, 1981)
- Limited participation by administration in the evaluation process (Agarwala-Rogers, 1977)
- Limited analysis to primarily quantifiable data obtained from experimentation (David, 1981; Edwards, Guttentag & Snapper, 1975)

Problems associated with consumers of evaluation reports:

- Limited knowledge of type of information needed (Mintzberg, 1973)
- Limited by tendency to oversimplify complex issues or data (Ligon & Jackson, 1989)
- Limited willingness to alter "status quo" (Weiss, 1988)

TABLE 2

Recommendations to Enhance the Utililization of Evaluation

IN DEVELOPING QUESTIONS...

- **Link** information sought to policy issues (DeLoria & Brookins, 1984)
- **Consider** political as well as educational aspects of issues (Chelimsky, 1986)
- **Form** the framework of the report with questions (DeLoria & Brookins, 1984)
- **Focus** on policy rather than methodololgy (Haensly, Lupkowsky & McNamara, 1987)
- **Encourage** participation as stakeholders by administrators as well as evaluation staff.

IN PRESENTING RESULTS...

- **Write** concise and accurate narrative (David, 1981)
- **Present** statistical information in the simplest manner (Mowbray, 1988)
- **Avoid** research and evaluation jargon (Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1978)
- **Recommend** action based on specific findings following specific questions (Caplan, 1977)
- **Disclose** information for possible grounds for agreement (Cronbach, 1982)
- **Use** visual modes of presentation (such as graphics) whenever possible (Mowbray, 1988)

TABLE 3

Comparison of Methods-Oriented Report and a Chart Essay (Policy-Oriented Report)

Methods-Oriented Report	Chart Essay
Problem statement	Design of the inquiry
Theoretical framework	
Review of the literature	Prior research
Hypotheses	Personal beliefs
Methods	
Subjects	Sampling design
Measures	Questionnaire design
Results	Findings on specific research questions
Discussion	
Policy recommendations	Implications for practice
Research recommendations	Future research

TABLE 4
The Chart Essay Process of Evaluation

STEPS	KEY ELEMENTS AND ROLES
1 Specify the project or program to be evaluated.	Evaluators identify specific project or program to be evaluated.
2.Identify program administrators who will receive the evaluation findings.	Program Administrators and evaluators identify all key personnel to receive findings.
3.Negotiate respective responsibilities of evaluators and program administrators.	Program Administrators and evaluators clarify the scope of work and respective roles. Program Administrators give evaluators control of data; Program Administrators retain control of interpretation.
4.Identify what issues are the focus of each group.	Program Administrators specify requirements; evaluators clarify and provide technical assistance.
5.Develop questions that reflect issues of interest	Evaluators write/adapt/adopt questions; Program Administrators respond/ evaluate/approve.
6.Design data collection strategies and analysis procedures.	Evaluators develop plan; Program Administrators respond/ evaluate/approve.
7.Collect the data.	Evaluators collect data.
8.Analyze data.	Evaluators produce descriptive (as opposed to prescriptive) findings.
9.Write the report.	Evaluators prepare descriptive results in chart essay format.
10.Present the findings.	Evaluators present to Program Administrators; Program Administrators present to constituents.
11.Elaborate implications.	Program Administrators interpret report, integrate with other data and develop implications for planning.
12.Act on implications.	Program Administrators develop plan.

TABLE 5

Example of a Chart Essay

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS: Attendance

Question 2.2.1 What was the attendance of students in Chapter 1 Summer School?

The data for this question were collected and analyzed from student enrollment forms (see Appendix A) and attendance information supplied by the teachers (see Appendix B). Simple averages were computed on the number of students present for each instructional week.

		Average Number of Students Present	
Week	Total	ESL	A Priori
One	2781	1197	1584
Two	3107	1315	1792
Three	2847	1184	1663
Four	2411	1004	1407
Five	2021	846	1175

TRENDS

The largest average number of students present occurred during the second week for both program components.

There was a downward trend in the average number of students present in both programs after the second week.

TABLE 6
Objectives of the Chart Essay Workshop

At the completion of this workshop, the participant will be able to:

- *Explain what a chart essay is*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of communication in research and evaluation*
- *Specify a specific project or program suitable to be evaluated using a chart essay*
- *Identify program administrators who will receive the evaluation findings.*
- *Negotiate respective responsibilities of evaluators and program administrators.*
- *Identify what issues are the focus of each stakeholder group*
- *Develop questions that reflect issues of interest*
- *Design data collection strategies and analysis*
- *Produce descriptive (as opposed to prescriptive) findings*
- *Compile a chart essay*
- *Present the findings to constituents.*

TABLE 7

Overview of Workshop

	Topics	Materials
Session 1:	Purpose	Summer School Report
	Objectives	Arts Magnet Report
	Housekeeping	Haensley, **et.al**,article
		Chart Essay Process...
Session 2:	Identification of project	Participant project
	The negotiation process	Other chart essays
	Designing the Inquiry	
	Use of the PC	
	Designing questions	
Session 3:	Designing tables then	Summer School Report
	collecting data for the tables	Arts Magnet Report
	Writing trend statements	Participant project
		Figure 4 of SISD report
Session 4:	Presenting findings	Jones, **et.al** paper
	Implications for Participant	Weiss article
	research	Mowbray article
		Ligon & Jackson article

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